

Take Care! Those Teeth Have to Last a Lifetime

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M.D., County Health Officer

Teeth were meant to last a lifetime. With proper care and attention at home plus proper professional attention they can and do last a lifetime. Yet nearly 85 per cent of the entire population of the United States has one or more forms of dental disease. Surveys have shown that about 50 per cent of all 2-year-olds have one or more decayed primary teeth while permanent teeth are being formed in the jaw below. By the time these children reach the age of 15, they already have, on an average, nine decayed permanent teeth.

National Dental Health Week, which comes this year Feb. 7 through 13, is sponsored annually by the American Dental Association and its affiliated groups including the Dental Society. Purpose of the week is to call the attention of all people — but especially of parents — to the need for proper oral hygiene, adequate nutrition and regular professional checkups as sound prevention. Neglecting these means of protecting the teeth often results in the necessity for expensive dental care in correcting tooth

and gum problems.

TEETH — in addition to their importance in proper chewing, comfort, general well-being and pleasing appearance — are essential in helping shape the mouth and face. Diseased teeth or gums can interfere with proper growth and development, and sometimes dental disease may trigger serious disease elsewhere in the body. Practices which help to prevent decay and tooth loss cannot be begun too early in life. Parents should be particularly careful with young children whose teeth are forming rapidly to develop dietary habits which include a good balance of all of the needed nutrients but which exclude

excessive amounts of sweets.

Bacteria always present in the mouth act on fermentable carbohydrates, especially sugar, to form acids. Within minutes these acids begin to attack tooth enamel, and once the enamel has been penetrated it can never heal itself. The resulting cavity will have to be repaired by a dentist.

THIS DOES not mean a person can never have a piece of candy or a soft drink; but sweets should be limited and other foods, such as fruits and vegetables, substituted.

Because of the rapidity with which acids can begin their destructive action on the teeth, proper brushing

should immediately follow each meal or snack.

Other basic rules for good oral health include regular visits to a dentist so that diseases can be detected and treated at an early stage before they become extensive; and use of fluorides.

FLUORIDES can be taken in the Los Angeles County either in drinking water in the proper amount, applied directly to the teeth at periodic intervals by the dentist, or in the form of fluoride tablets which can be prescribed by a dentist or physician.

Any person wishing a leaflet on ways to good dental health can receive one without charge by sending a written request to the Division of Public Health Education, 220 N. Broadway, Los Angeles 12.

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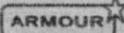


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